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Conference Abstract

Amplifying African Biodiversity Voices through Regional Support: Lessons from GBIF's Africa Support Team

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Abstract

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Africa Regional Support Team offers a compelling example of how regionally embedded cooperation can empower local scientific communities and expand participation in global biodiversity data initiatives. Acting in strong coordination with the GBIF Secretariat, the Africa Support Team plays a critical role in bridging gaps between institutions, national GBIF nodes, and global infrastructure through tailored multilingual support.

This extended abstract presents the team's work supporting more than 20 countries across the continent through distributed helpdesk services, targeted virtual training, mentorship, and peer-learning initiatives. Over the past year, the Africa team has led the delivery of thematic webinars, co-facilitated multi-country training courses, and supported institutions with practical guidance for data cleaning, metadata preparation, and dataset publishing. In particular, the team organized training programs on topics including the Darwin Core (DwC) standard, data digitization and curation, use of the Integrated Publishing Toolkit (IPT), publishing using Darwin Core Archives (DwC-A) and the Data paper.

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Another innovation was the integration of regional feedback into the GBIF Data Use Club and pilot initiatives such as the Data camp, allowing African voices to contribute to shaping global biodiversity data communities.

A key strength of this regional approach lies in its responsiveness to local needs. For example, the team's bilingual support (English and French) ensures wider accessibility, while one-on-one sessions help institutions navigate challenges like georeferencing, IPT use, and licensing. The team also facilitates regional exchanges through interactive events.

By embedding support close to the users in biodiversity informatics, the Africa Regional Support Team model enhances both technical capacity and long-term engagement, helping to respond more directly to the needs of the region. It demonstrates how locally anchored teams can increase biodiversity data publication and use while making sure African institutions not only contribute to but also benefit from global data infrastructure.

Keywords

data mobilization, capacity building, data sharing, biodiversity informatics, regional collaboration, open data, training, mentorship, community engagement

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.